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Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

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17-19 June 2014
Item 1 of the provisional agenda
Organizational matters

Report on the first regular session, 20 January 2014

I. Opening of the session

1. The first regular session of 2014 of the Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 20 January 2014.

2. The outgoing President of the Bureau of the Executive Board, Normans Penke (Latvia), opened the session. He underscored the achievements of the Board during the year 2013, highlighting its approval of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2014-2017, of the integrated budget for the biennium 2014-2015, and the evaluation function (see decisions 2013/4, 2013/5 and 2013/6 in UNW/2013/11). He attributed these achievements to the commitment of Board members and observer Member States. He also conveyed his appreciation to the outgoing Vice-Presidents who served during his tenure, Janet Karim (Malawi), Junichi Sumi (Japan), Roberto de León Huerta and Elisa Diaz Gras (Mexico), Vincent Herlihy (Ireland), to the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and the Deputy Executive Directors for their leadership and commitment to the Entity, and to the Executive Board secretariat for its continued support. He acknowledged the contribution of the former Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women, Michelle Bachelet, and expressed his best wishes following her election as President of Chile.

3. The outgoing President recalled his participation in the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), of the World Food Programme (WFP) and of UN-Women to Thailand and Myanmar as one of the highlights of his tenure. He particularly appreciated the opportunity to witness the work of the United Nations system at the country level, and to understand the challenges that the agencies face on the ground. He underlined the importance of the coordination role of UN-Women with respect to the work of the United Nations system on the promotion of gender equality and the benefits of strengthening

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existing partnerships within and outside of the United Nations system. The outgoing President noted that the field visit also allowed him to experience first-hand the interface between the normative and operational aspects of the work of UN-Women. He trusted that the Entity would successfully lead the organization of the 2014 joint meeting of the Executive Boards and the joint field visit to Panama and El Salvador.

4. In recalling the successful pledging event held during the annual session of the Executive Board of 2013, he noted that 16 Member States had committed themselves to financially supporting UN-Women programming. In addition, he highlighted the Member States that had donated in excess of $10 million (double digit donors): Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. As a result, the core budget of UN-Women had increased from $114 million in 2012 to approximately $152 million in 2013.

5. He reiterated that all Member States have a role to play in ensuring that UN-Women is in a better position to achieve its mandate and fulfil its financial needs. He urged Member States to maintain this momentum in 2014 and to consider increasing their contributions or joining the donor community, in order to allow for sustainable improvement of the lives of women and girls around the world. He stated that implementation is the key to making the twenty-first century the century for women and gender equality.

6. With respect to improving the working methods of the Executive Board, he proposed that the Board consider holding the elections of the Bureau in early January, or prior to the first regular session, in order to allow the new Bureau to be effectively involved in the preparation of the first session. He welcomed the proposal before the Board in relation to the harmonization and consolidation of UN-Women reports in accordance with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review. He stressed the importance of coherence and harmonization of reporting cycles across the United Nations system, which could only increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the system and translate into more meaningful impact on the ground.

II. Organizational matters

7. Under agenda item 1, organizational matters, the Executive Board elected the Bureau for the year 2014. Gonzalo Koncke (Uruguay), representing Latin American and Caribbean States, was elected to the position of President of the Board for the year 2014. The Vice-Presidents were elected from the following regional groups: Kadra Ahmed Hassan (Djibouti) (official nominee, formal election to be held at the annual session of the Board), representing African States; Helen Beck (Solomon Islands), representing Asia-Pacific States; Daria Wolosiuk (Poland), representing Eastern European States; and Amy Haddad (Australia), representing Western European and other States.

8. The newly elected Vice-President from Solomon Islands served as Chair of the session, in the absence of the newly-elected President for 2014. She thanked the outgoing President for initiating a smooth transition and acknowledged his contributions to the work of the Executive Board during the past year. She commended him for his strong commitment, as demonstrated by his maintaining his leadership of the Board following his appointment as Ambassador of Latvia to Japan

in the second quarter of 2013, and his return to New York to preside over the first regular session, as well as over the second regular session of 2013, held in September 2013, which was indicative of his firm dedication to the Board and to UN-Women.

9. The Chair thanked the Asia-Pacific States for nominating her for the role of Vice-President of the Executive Board and congratulated the President and Vice-Presidents on their election. She welcomed the appointment of Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka as Head of the Entity.

10. The Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director, in her opening statement, thanked the outgoing Bureau and welcomed the newly-elected members. She shared highlights from the past year and her vision for strengthening partnerships and looked ahead to key events and priorities in 2014.

11. The head of the Entity cited several significant initiatives and/or results in 2013 in favour of women and girls around the world, including the consensus reached at the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, on action to be taken to end violence against women and girls and a position paper released by UN-Women for gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development framework (available from www.unwomen.org). In this regard, the campaign for a stand-alone gender equality goal has a broad and growing constituency. Security Council resolution 2122 (2013), adopted in October 2013, placed women's leadership at the centre of all efforts to resolve conflict and promote peace for the first time.

12. Looking ahead for 2014, the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director stated that women's leadership and political participation would remain a top priority. The Entity would continue to strengthen advocacy efforts, strategic partnerships and alliances, and to respond to the multiple challenges limiting women's political participation, from the national to the local level.

13. In addition, the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the countdown to 2015 to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda would be major priorities in 2014. The review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action would serve to reinforce the post-2015 advocacy for a stand-alone goal on gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment and the integration of a gender perspective into the targets and indicators of all other sustainable development goals.

14. She urged governments to accelerate implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and to undertake inclusive and comprehensive national consultations, with the participation of all relevant Government ministries, as well as with civil society and other actors. She called for the active participation of Member States in the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the Conference, in order to ensure that the process results in a successful outcome for women and girls.

15. Regarding financial resources, the Head of the Entity reiterated that UN-Women continues to struggle for adequate funding. In a direct plea to Member States, she emphasized that a significant increase in resources would be needed to achieve the strategic plan and budgets approved by Member States for 2014-2015, amounting to $690 million. Core resources in the amount of $340 million and non-core resources

in the amount of $350 million would need to be raised during 2014-2015 and the support of Member States was sought in that regard.

16. The Executive Board adopted the annotated provisional agenda and workplan for the first regular session of 2014 and the report on the second regular session of 2013 (UNW/2013/10).

17. The Executive Board also approved the proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2014, to be held from 17 to 19 June 2014 (see annex I), and adopted the draft annual workplan for 2014.

III. Evaluation

18. The Director of the Evaluation Office presented the thematic evaluation on the contribution of UN-Women to increasing women's leadership and participation in peace and security and in humanitarian response. He underlined that the evaluation function at UN-Women serves three main and equally important purposes: it is a means to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders; it provides credible and reliable evidence for decision-making in order to improve results; and it contributes important lessons learned about normative, operational and coordination work to the existing knowledge base.

19. Corporate thematic evaluations are therefore an integral part of the evaluation function, as they assess the thematic areas of the Entity's strategic plan, providing evidence for accountability, decision-making and learning on corporate strategies and areas of work. They are designed to provide evaluative evidence to Executive Board members, UN-Women senior management, staff and partners.

20. The evaluation was the second corporate evaluation managed by UN-Women. Peace and security was selected as part of the corporate evaluation plan approved by the Executive Director. It was conducted between 2012 and 2013. Since UN-Women became operational in 2011, it was decided to include in the scope of the evaluation the work undertaken by the four predecessor entities. This allowed for lessons learned and good practices to inform the future work of UN-Women. At the country level in particular, organizational changes to consolidate the new Entity were still underway during the evaluation process, and during the fieldwork period of the evaluation, many country offices were not yet fully consolidated.

21. Although the initial terms of reference of the evaluation included humanitarian work, at the inception phase it was evident that, owing to the fact that the previous entities had no mandate in this area of work, there was not enough information to be evaluated. Given this context, the evaluation was designed to provide forward-looking and actionable recommendations to guide UN-Women work on humanitarian action, based on previous work conducted by UN-Women and predecessor entities. The evaluation was intended to inform management decisions and planning and programming strategies, with the goal of maximizing the comparative advantage of UN-Women. Among the results of the evaluation with respect to operational capacities, UN-Women staff was found to have a high level of technical competencies and skills, with a high level of engagement, even though this varied from office to office. The evaluation also found that UN-Women was seen as a knowledge leader in the area of women, peace and security, but mainly at the global level. The communication gaps between different parts of the Entity and

weak knowledge management systems weaken the organization's capacity as a knowledge leader in a decentralized model. Existing resources (both human and financial) were inadequate to fulfil the increased contribution expected of UN-Women in this area of work.

22. Recommendations arising from the evaluation included that UN-Women take the following actions: improve staff capacity through training and on the job learning, by combining thematic expertise and advocacy skills; introduce, at the country level, more systematic risk assessments and tools for monitoring and managing risk; invest in strategic monitoring and knowledge production and management, in order to enable feedback and documentation on lessons learned; and invest in organizational capacities, specifically in financial and human resources, in the area of women, peace and security.

23. UN-Women, in its management response to the thematic evaluation presented by the Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director for Policy and Programme, welcomed the evaluation's findings regarding technical and knowledge leadership and the convening role of the Entity in the area of women, peace and security. The recommendations were considered useful in supporting the Entity's country and regional offices, and the work of its Policy Division in significantly enhancing the Entity's provision of support to the United Nations system and Member States in advancing women's protection in situations of armed conflict and their participation in conflict resolution and recovery. The Executive Board was informed that UN-Women was incorporating the recommendations of the evaluation in efforts to strengthen its work on women, peace and security, in accordance with the stated priority in this area within its strategic plan, 2014-2017.

24. In responding to the opening statement of the head of the Entity and to the presentation on the thematic evaluation, several speakers expressed appreciation for the work of the outgoing President and congratulated the newly-elected President of the Executive Board. They also commended the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director of UN-Women and staff of the Entity on their achievements so far, especially within conflict and post-conflict situations.

25. Member States acknowledged the vital role of UN-Women as the lead actor on women, peace and security within the United Nations system and its ability to engage and influence high-level stakeholders in advancing this sector. One speaker noted significant improvement in inter-agency coordination on peace and security work since the creation of UN-Women.

26. Delegations welcomed the thematic evaluation and the increased attention focused by UN-Women on the area of humanitarian action. While recognizing humanitarian action as a new and growing area of work for the Entity, delegations highlighted the need to increase women's leadership on peace and security issues. Some underscored the importance of a more flexible and adaptable approach for addressing unanticipated situations such as within humanitarian settings, where regular programming types may not be possible. UN-Women was urged to take full advantage of the wealth of operational and programmatic knowledge of the funds, programmes and agencies in the area of humanitarian action. Some delegations called for the development of joint programmes in this area.

27. Member States made a number of proposals regarding future evaluations, including undertaking an evaluation of the contribution of UN-Women to enhancing

women's economic empowerment or an evaluation of the performance of all UN-Women country offices working in fragile States or conflict and post-conflict States.

28. Some delegations underscored that in spite of the existence of many international commitments, the number of women and experts in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment who are involved in formal peacebuilding processes remains low.

29. One speaker urged the Secretary-General to give specific attention to the appointment of women to senior decision-making positions, such as heads of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. Some speakers underscored the need for greater focus on technology and education.

30. With regard to resource mobilization, a number of delegations pledged to continue to increase their financial contributions to the Entity, including Estonia, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. Citing recent cabinet approval, Japan announced it would become, for the first time, a double digit donor to the Entity in 2014. The Republic of Korea mentioned its recent contribution to a specific UN-Women programme and New Zealand announced a move from annual core funding to multi-year core funding to the Entity. Delegations called on others to consider substantively increasing their resource commitments as well, while emphasizing that a greater degree of funding in this regard would enhance the ability of UN-Women to deliver on long-term strategic priorities, capacity-building and reporting. The need for UN-Women to be creative in finding new avenues of fundraising as well as broadening its funding base was also underscored.

31. Several speakers welcomed the role of UN-Women in supporting the incorporation of gender perspectives in the elaboration of the post-2015 development framework and advocating for a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the mainstreaming of gender among other goals. Delegations referred to upcoming intergovernmental processes, such as the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda and the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as opportunities to strengthen and mainstream the women's rights agenda. The importance of the role of UN-Women was underlined as key to securing progress in the upcoming sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development, and the review of the International Conference on Population and Development, to be convened in September 2014.

IV. Informal briefings

A. Operational response at the country level

32. The briefing was adjourned following a point of order raised by a delegation. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that the briefing would be rescheduled in an informal setting.

B. Humanitarian response strategy

33. The Director of the Programme Division presented the draft humanitarian response strategy. The presentation underscored the importance of building partnerships with national and regional institutions, civil society, United Nations system partners and other humanitarian actors in order to ensure accountability, strengthened coordination and coherence in addressing the needs of women and girls in humanitarian action. Such humanitarian action encompasses disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response and early recovery. Member States were urged to share their comments, which would be taken into account for the finalization of the strategy.

34. Some delegations requested information about how the integrated budget would reflect the humanitarian response and how UN-Women would effectively coordinate gender-sensitive responses of the United Nations system in humanitarian contexts. The Entity was urged to pay more attention to irreversible disasters such as rising sea levels and ocean acidification.

C. Discussion on the harmonization of reporting cycles

35. UN-Women sought the guidance of the Executive Board on the possibility of presenting a consolidated report, merging the report on operational activities and the annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan, at its annual session to be held in June 2014. All speakers expressed their support for the harmonization of reporting and generally agreed on the advantages of one consolidated report. One delegation recommended that an official decision be endorsed by the Executive Board on this matter. The secretariat agreed on this process and the relevant decision is contained in annex II to the present report.

V. Other matters

36. The Vice-Chair of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS/UN-Women Staff Council made a formal presentation to the Executive Board for the first time and announced the four newly elected UN-Women staff representatives. The Vice-Chair thanked the head of the Entity for her show of support for staff representation and staff-management dialogue, and also thanked the President and members of the Board for institutionalizing this dialogue, while expressing his confidence that this was the beginning of an effective and productive partnership.

37. Following the closing statements of the Chair and the Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director, (Intergovernmental Support and Strategic Partnerships), on behalf of the head of the Entity, the first regular session for 2014 was concluded.

Annex I

Proposed provisional agenda and workplan for the annual session, 17-19 June 2014

Provisional agenda

1. Organizational matters
2. Strategic plan
3. Evaluation
4. Pledging event
5. Audit matters
6. Field visit
7. Other matters

Tentative workplan

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Tuesday, 17 June	10 a.m.-11.30 a.m.		Opening of the session • Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director
		1	Organizational matters • Election of the Vice-President (African States) • Adoption of the agenda and workplan for the annual session of 2014 • Adoption of the report on the first regular session of 2014 (UNW/2014/1)
	11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.	2	Strategic plan • Report of the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director on the progress made in 2013 in implementing the strategic plan, 2011-2013
	3 p.m.-6 p.m.	2	Strategic plan (*continued*) *Informal introduction of draft decisions*

Date	*Time*	*Item*	*Subject*
Wednesday, 18 June	10 a.m.-11.30 a.m.	3	Evaluation • Report on the evaluation function • 2014-2017 corporate evaluation plan • Joint evaluation regarding joint programmes on gender equality in the United Nations system • Joint management response to the joint evaluation
	11.30 a.m.-1 p.m.	4	Pledging event
	1.20 p.m.-2.30 p.m.		*Informal consultations on draft decisions*
	3 p.m.-4 p.m.		Special briefing on the operational response of UN-Women at the country level
	4 p.m.-6 p.m.		*Information consultations on draft decisions*
Thursday, 19 June	10 a.m.-11 a.m.	5	Audit matters • Report on internal audit and investigation activities for the period 1 January to 31 December 2013 • Report of the Audit Advisory Committee
	11 a.m.-1 p.m.	6	Joint field visit • Report on the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund/United Nations Office for Project Services, of the United Nations Children's Fund, of UN-Women and of the World Food Programme to Panama and El Salvador, 23 March-1 April 2014
		7	Other matters
			Adoption of draft decisions
		1	Organizational matters • Approval of the agenda and workplan for the second regular session of 2014
			Closing of the session • Statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Under-Secretary-General/Executive Director

Annex II

Decision adopted at the first regular session for 2014

2014/1
Harmonization of reporting cycles

The Executive Board,

Recalls General Assembly resolutions 64/289 and 67/226 and further to Economic and Social Council resolution 2013/5, requests UN-Women to consolidate the report on operational activities and the report on the implementation of the strategic plan into one report to be presented at its annual session, starting from 2014.

20 January 2014